

Nature, Nurture, Choice, & God's Will 4

Presenting Ourselves to Jesus

(preached 8/27/22)

Please turn to *Romans 6:1*.

THUS FAR:

- NATURE: you were born that way.
- NURTURE: you were raised that way (your environment [INCLUDING OTHER PEOPLE] influenced & molded you and still does).
- CHOICE: you picked it (according to personal desires/goals).
- GOD'S WILL: He picked it (also designed, planned, created, and enacted).
- We've covered both the corrupted nature we inherited from our old dad Adam, and the divine nature we inherited from our new Dad God our Father.
- Our biological birth was NOT the way God made us—it's the result of corrupted nature.
- Our born-again self is the way God made us—holy, righteous, forgiven, and children of God.
- Our spirits are now direct creations of God and the Lord has shared His divine nature with us!
- NURTURE is the world's attempt to mold on the inside us into its image.
- Nurture can be the way we were raised by our parents, the environment we grew up in and live in now, traumatic events, and anything else that we witnessed, was said or done to us, that has influenced how we believe, think, feel, act, and react.
- We compared this world to the Matrix and the master manipulator of this world is Satan and his fallen angels—what the Bible refers to as “the high places.”
- When Pavlov showed his dog food, the dog salivated.
- Thus Satan works overtime to keep us distracted by the needs and pleasures of the flesh and the world, tempting us constantly.
- He keeps us in conflict with each other rather than seeing him as the true enemy.
- This world is wicked and evil. It hates Jesus and hates us. It's a place full of darkness.
- Jesus chose us OUT of this world. When we were born again, He remolded us into His image.
- Jesus and His Spirit are the light of this world and the only light there is.
- When said Light shines into the darkness of this world, the darkness does not comprehend/absorb it—it flees!
- Jesus freed us from the Matrix and part of our discipleship is to live set apart from it.
- Our bodies may still live here, but our spirits are free! We walk in this world but are not of it.
- Jesus OVERCAME this world and the same overcoming spirit—the HS—lives in us!
- We'll still face persecution and other aspects of the fallen world, we'll still be tempted in our flesh.

- Yet we have God's grace that superabounds over all of it!

TODAY we talk about personal choice.

FREE WILL. God has free will and we are made in His image—so we do too. I say this because there are good Christians who don't believe humanity has free will because they think it reduces the praise and glory that should be given to God alone.

ANGELS & MEN CHOOSE. I respectfully disagree. Both humans and angels are made in God's image and these two races alone were granted free will among all creation. Satan rebelled, the Genesis 6 angels rebelled, the 70 angelic princes of Psalm 82 rebelled, where those like Michael and Gabriel have chosen to stick with God. Adam chose to eat the FF, Abraham had a kid with Hagar, Moses struck the rock, David got with Bathsheba, Solomon indulged paganism, and Peter denied Christ 3x. In the very end of the Millennial Kingdom after Christ returns, many humans will side with Satan against Christ and they will choose to do so.

CHOOSING GOD'S GRACE ISN'T A WORK. *Choosing to accept God's grace for Salvation and to obey God afterwards isn't a "work" and doesn't diminish His glory one iota.*

EXALTS HIM MORE. If anything, it exalts Him more! Have you ever given someone good advice or tried to warn them away from a bad person or situation? Whatever they choose, you get the credit if you're right. If they ignore you and everything you said came true, the glory is on you for your wisdom. If they follow your wisdom and dodge a bullet, you get the credit for saving them.

IT'S THE SAME WITH GOD. We disobey the Lord, everything falls apart, and He was right. We come back to Him on our knees in repentance, asking for grace and mercy and He gives it. All the glory goes to Him! We obey God and things turn out well, so now we stand up and give testimony to the same—God gets all the praise!

GOD CALLS ISRAEL TO CHOOSE. Look what He says to the Israelites back in the day after making covenant with them:|

Deuteronomy 30:15-20 (ESV)

¹⁵ "See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil.

¹⁶ If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you today, by loving the LORD your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his rules, then you shall live and multiply, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to take possession of it.

¹⁷ But if your heart turns away, and you will not hear, but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them,

¹⁸ I declare to you today, that you shall surely perish. You shall not live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to enter and possess.

¹⁹ I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live,

²⁰ loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.”

Verse 15: sets options before us, which is what God does. There are many verses like these and this choice is the same God has given since Eden: we can choose Him or other gods. We can choose to obey what He’s decided, or obey what we decide. There’s a consequence either way, good and bad. If we don’t choose God, it’s bad. If we do choose Him, it’s good.

JOSHUA RENEWS COVENANT. At some point after Joshua took over, he gathered all Israel to renew covenant with God and here is the famous sermon he preached to them, one verse which we quote often:

Joshua 24:14-15 (ESV)

¹⁴ “Now therefore fear the LORD and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD.

¹⁵ And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”

POWER OF CHOICE. So now let’s review what power choice has and doesn’t have.

Without Jesus, nature and nurture are too powerful for us. Whether we were born that way, or the world shaped us that way, we cannot simply choose our way out.

ADDICTION. I don’t argue with people who say addiction is a disease. I agree that no one forced them to take the drug or drink the booze the first time they tried it...but the effect those things have on the brain and body is horrible. Fallen nature and nurture! Drugs cause the brain to hyperproduce dopamine which is the “feel good” neurotransmitter. As soon as the brain recognizes that the “floodgates” have been opened too much, it shuts them down which results in 2 terrible things: 1) Diminishing returns: it takes more of the drug taken more frequently to produce the feelings of pleasure and 2) coming down off the high is a fall all the way to “living Hell.” In other words, the brain has shut down dopamine production to the level that, when the high wears off, the person feels like they’re in Hades.

BIGGER. The addiction quickly becomes bigger—way bigger—than any amount of free will or good choices the person can make.

If you and I could choose our way to righteousness, we wouldn't need Jesus to be Saved.

If you and I could choose our way to holy living after we're Saved, we don't need God's grace.

DEAD WORKS. A common phrase used in the days of Jesus was “dead works” which meant attempting to perform the works of the Law to obtain righteousness. The works of the Law were restraint from evil, doing what's good, and acts of atonement through blood sacrifice. Even under the OC these deeds involved God and His provision, however, so a dead work was when they were performed w/o God.

Under the NC Jesus performed all the works of the Law for us: He restrained Himself from evil, did what was good, and He was the blood sacrifice for atonement.

THE POWER OF OUR CHOICE RESTS IN JESUS. WE MUST CHOOSE HIM TO OVERCOME NATURE, NURTURE, AND THE DEVIL.

Romans 6:1-4 (ESV)

¹ What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?

² By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?

³ Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

⁴ We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

DIVINE SELF. In these 4 verses, the Apostle Paul is reminding us of our new nature: the divine self, remade in the image of Christ. Our old self—which Paul calls the flesh—is inferior and still subject to nature and nurture...even dominated by it. Paul is saying that aspect of us is dead—crucified—and we have been born-again.

Romans 6:5-11 (ESV)

⁵ For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

⁶ We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.

⁷ For one who has died has been set free from sin.

⁸ Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.

⁹ We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has

dominion over him.

¹⁰ For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God.

¹¹ So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Verses 5-7 remind us that Christ freed us from the Matrix. By sharing His divine nature with us, fallen nature and nurture are no longer our masters!

Verses 8-11: Jesus reversed the curse of Adam! He undid Adam's disobedience and the terrible consequence it had on us! Death is no longer our king and sin is no longer our queen!

Romans 6:12-14 (ESV)

¹² Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.

¹³ Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.

¹⁴ For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

Verses 12-13 sound like a finger wagging where Paul is telling us to make better choices...but that's not what he's doing. He's teaching us instead and giving us the secret on the right choice to make—one that truly empowers us to overcome Adam's curse.

Verse 14 is the beginning of that secret: we're under the new covenant called Grace. What does that mean and how does that empower free choice?

Romans 6:15-19 (ESV)

¹⁵ What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!

¹⁶ Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?

¹⁷ But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed,

¹⁸ and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.

¹⁹ I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification.

Verse 16 is the next part of the secret to empowering decisions: ***who are we presenting ourselves to?***

KINGS & SUBJECTS. "Presenting ourselves" has to do with kings and their subjects. The king is one with all the power and authority. As his subjects, we submit to the king and he is our master. He can and will command us and we MUST obey.

“PRESENTING ONESELF” TO A KING IS A CHOICE WE MUST MAKE.

It’s a premeditated act on our part where we walk ourselves, on purpose, to him, bend the knee, and call him “lord.”

The act of this presentation is making oneself available to said King, to serve him in whatever way he deems fit.

TWO PALACES & KINGS. Now I want you to imagine the following: before you stand two palaces and each palace has its own king.

- Palace #1 has a king who is righteous and just and if you present yourself to him, he will require that your lifestyle be the same. He’ll send you off on missions to help him protect and provide for his subjects.
- Palace #2 has a king whose hedonistic, readily indulging in food, booze, and other fleshly pleasures. If you present yourself to him he’ll encourage and empower you indulge in all those things, then he’ll send you off on missions to threaten and coerce his subjects into paying their taxes to support his lifestyle.

Whichever king you present yourself to, you’re submitting to. You’ll have to obey that king, whatever he commands.

The choice is yours.

NATURE/NURTURE IS A KING. Paul is telling us the same thing in Romans 6. Fallen nature/nurture are like a king—more powerful than we are, of high rank, and with great authority. It sits in a palace ruling over people’s lives. We were born as his subjects living in his land, under his rule.

THEN ANOTHER KING CAME, far more powerful and authoritative, and His Name was and is Jesus. He constructed His own palace where He rules and reigns from.

WHATEVER CHOICE WE MAKE WILL EMPOWER US. (REPEAT).

The more we choose this world, the more empowered our flesh is. It’s desires, passions, and goals will all be supernaturally enhanced and will rule over us just like drugs do an addict.

OBESSE MAN. I once watched a show of a young man who weighed around 800 lbs who still lived with his mom. When being interviewed and asked about his condition, he began to explain the power that food had over him, especially fried chicken. I recall watching him describe it—a euphoric look came over his face and his tone of voice as he explained the effects it had on him from the moment he could smell it all the way up eating. It was obvious that, even though he knew it was killing him, he couldn't stop himself.

ENABLING MOM. What's more was that his mother completely enabled him as he was unable to leave his house and could barely walk. She was the one who bought him all the foods he was addicted to and gave them to him.

THE WORLD. This world is just like that mom: it feeds and enables the desires of our flesh. It would rather keep us distracted and helpless while trying to convince us it has our back. The only thing its doing is killing us.

CAN'T JUST FINGER WAG. Again I say: we can't just finger wag someone like that and tell them they need to choose better eating habits.

Without something—or Someone—outside of and superior to nature and nurture to empower us, we are slaves to our desires and this world.

CAN'T SAVE OURSELVES. We cannot present ourselves to ourselves and be free. In other words, we can't rely upon ourselves to get out of the pits we find ourselves in. We can't muster enough will power and discipline to overcome. It's not necessarily true that if we dug ourselves into this pit on our own, we can climb out of it the same way.

We need to present ourselves to a righteous King Who is greater than us, stronger than bad choices we've made in the past, greater than fallen nature, and more powerful than how we've been nurtured.

We need to rest in the choices He's made, His divine nature, and allow Him to nurture us.

JESUS. Our best act of free will is to present ourselves to Jesus Christ, the King of kings.

Romans 6:20-23 (ESV)

²⁰ For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.

²¹ But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death.

²² But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life.

²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

PROGRAM. An addict cannot overcome their addiction by simply choosing to stop & change their habits. But if an addict were to choose to enter into a Christ-based program that would empower them to overcome it, they could and should choose the program.

When we present ourselves to Him, we are His to command. He will NEVER tell us to do something sinful. He will never give us a righteous goal to achieve in a sinful way.

WHEN WE APPROACH HIM AND PRESENT OURSELVES, WE'RE ASKING FOR HELP TO RESIST THE TEMPTATIONS OF OUR FLESH AND THE WORLD AND LIVE RIGHTEOUS, HOLY LIVES THAT REFLECT WHO HE IS.

HE IS THE ONE WHO EMPOWERS US WITH SUPERNATURAL GRACE TO OVERCOME SAID TEMPTATIONS.